

Message Text

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ACTION OES-09

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SPOP TS
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S ROLE IN DEALING WITH PRESSING GLOBAL
PROBLEMS--POPULATION GROWTH AND ADEQUATE FOOD PRODUCTION

REF: (A) STATE 200397; (B) TUNIS 5576

1. TO PROVIDE THE APPROPRIATE BACKGROUND FOR MY REPORT REQUESTED BY REF (A) I SHOULD RELATE A COMMENT PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA MADE DURING THE VISIT LAST YEAR OF CHASE MANHATTAN BANK PRESIDENT DAVID ROCKEFELLER. PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA TOLD ROCKEFELLER IN MY PRESENCE THAT HE ENVIED HIM HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT WITH EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT, AND ASKED ROCKEFELLER TO TELL SADAT THAT OVERPOPULATION, NOT THE ISRAELIS, WAS EGYPT'S MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM AND THAT MOST OF HIS PROBLEMS COULD BE SOLVED BY FOLLOWING TUNISIA'S LEAD IN FAMILY PLANNING. FOR POINTERS ON HOW TO HANDLE IT, SADAT SHOULD SEND SOME EGYPTIANS OVER TO TUNISIA FOR ON-THE-JOB TRAINING, THE PRESIDENT RECOMMENDED.

2. PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S REMARK CONVEYS BETTER THAN PAGES OF STATISTICS HOW TUNISIA'S PRIORITIES HAVE BEEN SHAPED ON FOOD AND POPULATION ISSUES. THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT THE INTENSE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THIS

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GOVERNMENT HAS APPROACHED ITS OWN PROBLEMS WITH POPULATION GROWTH AND FOOD PRODUCTION. SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN FOOD IS ONE OF THE TOP OBJECTIVES OF THE CURRENT FIVE-YEAR PLAN AND WE ARE COMMITTED TO HELP ACHIEVE THESE GOALS. TUNISIA HAS LONG SINCE ESTABLISHED THE LEGAL BASIS FOR THE RAPID EXTENSION OF FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMS. IT HAS FOLLOWED THROUGH WITH FUNDING AND ACTION AND HAS SHOWN A

CONSISTENT PATTERN OF WILLINGNESS TO EXPERIMENT WITH NEW, EVEN RADICAL, APPROACHES IN THE POPULATION FIELD.

3. WE HAVE JUST LEARNED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS CONVOKED A SPECIAL MEETING ON NATIONAL NUTRITION POLICY. IT WILL BE A TUNISIAN AFFAIR, BUT I AM PLEASED THAT THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF NUTRITION, WHICH WE ARE GENEROUSLY SUPPORTING THROUGH OUR NUTRITION PLANNING PROJECT, PLANS TO USE ANALYTICAL MATERIALS DEVELOPED BY THE USAID CONTRACT TEAM IN MAKING HIS PRESENTATION TO THE PRIME MINISTER. I MAINTAIN FREQUENT CONTACT WITH THE DIRECTOR BOTH OFFICIALLY AND PERSONALLY.

4. ALTHOUGH I DID NOT HAVE AS MUCH OPPORTUNITY AS I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO DISCUSS HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING MATTERS WITH FORMER MINISTER OF HEALTH BEN HAMIDA DURING HIS SHORT TENURE, I HAVE FREQUENT SOCIAL CONTACT WITH MEZRI CHEKIR, HEAD OF THE FAMILY PLANNING OFFICE. (CHEKIR IS POLITICALLY CLOSE TO BOURGUIBA AND HAS REPORTED MANY TIMES ON THE PRESIDENT'S ABIDING INTEREST IN AND CONCERN FOR THE PROGRESS OF THE FAMILY PLANNING EFFORT). MY MOST RECENT CONVERSATION WITH MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE HASSAN BELKHODYM WAS REPORTED IN REF (B).

5. DURING MY TOUR A PRIME CONCERN HAS BEEN TO REBUILD THE USAID PROGRAM TO A MEANINGFUL LEVEL IN THE CONTEXT OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TUNISIA'S AMBITIOUS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS. WITH REGARD TO THE LATTER PART OF YOUR REQUEST, THAT I NOTE ANY SUGGESTIONS TO INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR PROGRAMS, I WOULD STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF MATCHING TUNISIAN EXPECTATIONS WITH EARLY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CENTRAL TUNISIA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM PACKAGE. THE FIRST ROUND OF SOUNDLY STUDIED PROJECTS IS BEING SUBMITTED FOR WASHINGTON REVIEW AND I LOOK FORWARD TO EARLY APPROVAL OF THESE PROJECTS.

MULCAHY

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